1: Thurston & Rangachari E,G-4,5 (no date) 1909
AW50 Badaga AW50

881 night, and returns home on the following day clad in new cloths, leaving the old ones in the hut. When she arrives at her house, she salutes all the people who are there, and receives their blessing. On Sunday she goes to the houses of her relations, where she is given kadalai (*Cicer arietinum*) and other food. She may not enter the inner apartment of her house until she has seen the crescent moon. Badaga women observe five days menstrual pollution. If a woman discovers her condition before washing her face in the early morning, that day is included in the pollution period. Otherwise, the period must be prolonged over six days. On the third day she bathes in cold water, using the bark of *Pouzolzia* (thorē-kōlu), and on the fourth day is allowed a change of clothing after a bath. On this day she leaves the hut, and passes a portion of the night in the verandah of her house. After cooking and eating her evening meal, she bathes, and enters the outer room. Early on the following morning, the spot which she has occupied is cleaned, and she bathes in a stream. Returning home, she eats her food in the outer room, where she remains till next morning. Even children may not be touched by a menstruating woman. If, by chance, this happens, the child must be washed to remove the poilution, before it can be handled by others. This restriction is apparently not observed by any other tribe or caste.

841 (515) (824)

584 (583) Writing concerning marriage among the Badagas, Harkness states * that "it is said to be common for one who is in want of labourers to promise his daughter in marriage to the son or other relative of a neighbour not in circumstances so flourishing as himself. And, these engagements being entered into, the intended bridegroom

* *Op. cit.*

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
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to spit in the proper place.' With this attitude prevalent, the spread of various viruses and of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* has been greatly curtailed. The regular washing of the body and shaving of pubic hair have also contributed to health by restricting the incidence of bodily fungi and lice-borne diseases.

The ecological significance of these various beliefs and practices is that as the Nilgiri population increased in the nineteenth century and some village streams began to be polluted by this new pressure, the Badagas managed to avoid some contamination by switching from drinking stream water and fresh milk to tea, coffee and sometimes alcohol, all of which would be relatively free of bacterial organisms. The new balance with the environment that this change brought about was certainly one factor in the remarkable increase in the Badaga population since the advent of the British (Appendix 2).

At the same time that this change in drinking habits was occurring their eating habits were undergoing an equally radical transformation. In part this was due to the several dozen types of fruit, grain and vegetable introduced from Europe by British settlers and adopted by most Badagas. The variety of their diet was thus greatly increased.

VILLAGE NAMES

A study of the present Badaga hamlet names yields a body of insights about the early settlements formed during the two and a half centuries preceding the first British report (Keys, 1812).

Perhaps a somewhat lyrical description of the Nilgiri Plateau may at this point aid the reader's understanding of what is to follow:

> The plateau is a true tableland, its average height being very uniform. But there is not a square mile of level ground in the whole of it, its surface being broken by endless undulations which in places swell into considerable and distinct ranges. It rises most abruptly from the plains below it; and on the west, above the Ouchterlony Valley and southwards, its sides are often sheer, bare walls, hundreds of feet in height and too steep even for trees to obtain a footing on them. Elsewhere dense forest covers almost the whole of its slopes . . .
>
> It is first of all divided east and west into two fairly equal but

3: Hockings E-5 (1962-1963) 1968
AN50 Badaga AN50

Kotas especially for this purpose. Sprigs from the branch are distributed, and every man places a small sprig on top of the salt that remains in his basket. A branch is also cut from the hill gooseberry and distributed in exactly the same way.

The celebrants now return to their homes, again led by the man from the Great House. Other male members of each family may follow this party, driving the buffaloes and carrying the hoes. Each man in the ceremonial party, however, has to carry his own potful of water, his iron rod, and his basket (which now contains a little salt, the two twigs mentioned, and also a remaining piece of the *'hubbe* that has otherwise been used as a brush). As the men walk they chant *"hau hau,"* an expression of their happiness. When they reach the hamlet they shout *"ki:i:ki,"* which means, "It is finished." Then the party splits up. Each member goes to his calves and gives them a taste of the salty water he has brought back. After that he is ready to enter his house.

There is still more ritual to be performed, however, for the man must enter his house in a prescribed way. As he comes toward the entrance, the oldest woman in the family stands just inside the inner room, leaning out through its doorway in such a way that she can also see through the entrance to the house. As soon as she sees the man coming across the front yard, she asks him three times in succession, "Have all the cattle drunk salt well?" He answers "Yes" each time. During this interchange the man continues walking but his pace is measured so that he will not enter the house until he has said "Yes" for the third time. On reaching the doorway he is careful to step auspiciously across the threshold with the right foot first.

Once inside the house he stands the iron rod against the wall near the door, and then puts the basket of salt on top of the hole in the floor where grain is usually crushed and where the salt was powdered earlier. The woman then comes from the inner room, takes the three sprigs from this basket, and hangs them from the ceiling of the outer room. She carries the basket to the inner room, which is a kitchen and dining room, and she uses up whatever salt remains in cooking a meal. During the whole performance of the salt-giving ceremony she should use no other salt than this. (Nowadays she has generally finished cooking by the time the man returns home, and so just adds a pinch of his salt to the prepared meal.)

The meal which is served at this time to the members of the household differs from ordinary morning meals in certain respects. The man who has represented the family in the salt-giving ceremony is served before everyone else; ordinarily this would only occur when no other adult male members of the family were present. Furthermore, he is served in the outer room of the house, although meals are otherwise eaten in the inner room, where they are cooked. He eats butter first of all; the rice and vegetable curry follow. Afterwards he must wash his hands in cold water; usually he washes in hot.

During the afternoon each of the celebrants carries his pot of water to the cattle pen and there pours it on the ground. Again the man from the

3: Hockings, E-5 (1962-1963) 1968
AW50 Badaga AW50

796 threshold first; to plant the left foot before the right would bring the ceremony to a most inauspicious end.

Even though the ceremony has concluded, the men who have performed in it take various precautions to insure that they retain their state of purity for the remainder of the day. The meal that they eat is a vegetarian [262] one; thus they avoid polluting themselves and their houses by having meat cooked on this occasion. To start the meal with butter is very auspicious, since eating butter is in Badaga thinking a sign of affluence and good luck. When the men have finished the meal they are careful to wash in [515] cold water—the prescribed means of washing whenever Badagas wish [783] to remain in a pure state. Afterwards they can clean and repair the cattle shed if they wish, for this is a meritorious act performed in a sacred place. Otherwise the only permitted activities are the cleaning of their clothes and of themselves.

Finally, we must consider the social relations which are given expression during the ceremony. The various sources of the community's welfare and of its power structure are reflected in the ceremony, albeit in symbolic reference. The family is represented usually by its male head, otherwise by a chosen male representative. The lineage is nowadays symbolized [621] in the common pit used by all the cattle of each lineage. The entire hamlet community is represented in concerted action by the party of men who come from every household in the hamlet, as well as by the man from the Great House who is the living descendant of the founding ancestor.

One curious element is the habit of feeding each celebrant afterwards in the outer, less sanctified, room of his house. Men regularly eat in the [264] inner room; the people who normally must eat in the outer room are the [562] women and all visitors from lower-status phratries of the Badaga com- [574] munity. It would seem that the man who gives salt to his cattle is confident of his own ritual purity and that of his entire house on this occasion. By eating in the outer room he suggests that status differences between men and women, and between his phratry and others, are of no importance provided ritual purity prevails. This attitude is also reflected in other aspects of [582] Badaga culture: people of higher and lower ranking clans intermarry, [615] both hypergamously and hypogamously, and members of lower ranking phratries sometimes participate in the temple rituals of higher phratries without polluting the temples.

562 Women are excluded altogether from the salt-giving ceremony, if only because there is a risk that the presence of a ritually unclean woman 796 might subvert the benefits looked for from God on this auspicious occasion. And yet the women do play a necessary "backstage" role in cleaning the house, decorating it, bringing in water, and cooking the meal. Segregation [621] of women from the ceremony underlines a basic fact of hamlet organization: the hamlet is exogamous, and hence all wives in it are "outsiders," members initially of other hamlets. Furthermore, women inherit neither land nor cattle. Symbolically the ceremony concludes an annual pact between the men and God for the fruitful blessing of crops, cattle, and children, all of which in Badaga law belong to men alone. Even so, the oldest woman

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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after a few hours. This seemingly trivial belief had a hygienic importance, for it meant that fresh milk would be used quickly and not kept, lest the tabu about boiling be violated. If milk were allowed to "boil up" (i.e., curdle) *of its own accord*, this was taken as an omen of imminent danger or death for the household, and thus a very serious matter indeed.

The effect upon Badaga health of the changes in drinking habits outlined above was reinforced by other cultural practices, specifically in regard to buffalo dung and spitting. Various maps of Badaga villages made in the first half of the nineteenth century show that several stone kraals were located just outside each village. This means that the fecal matter of buffalo herds was confined to a certain place; (I have myself seen dung over a foot deep in some kraals). Unsavoury though these places must have been, they ensured that the dung was not spread throughout the habitation area of each village, and this substantially reduced "the chance of transference of enzootic and epizootic diseases to man" (Alland 1970: 56). As the value of farmland for tea and potato cultivation grew, especially during the present century, the Badaga population increased dramatically but the size of the cattle herds dwindled. The present-day situation is therefore that Badaga population density is vastly higher than it was, but the risks of cattle-borne infection are proportionately much less because the lack of grazing has forced them to make heavy reductions in the size of their herds and abandon many of the kraals.

As we shall see below (2.11), indiscriminate spitting was not allowed in and near the home or temple. Spittoons were used inside the house; and a proverb stressed that, "If you ask for an obligation it is essential to see the right people: it is essential to spit in the proper place." With this attitude prevalent, the spread of various viruses and of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* has been greatly curtailed. The regular washing of the body and shaving of pubic hair described below (2.9, 2.13) have also contributed to health by restricting the incidence of bodily fungi and lice-borne diseases (Alland 1970: 58). In nearly all villages the houses are built in parallel lines with solid stone or brick walls partitioning each house from its neighbours. In Ke:ti, a typical village in this respect, it was found that on the average each row of houses was separated from those in front and behind it by a distance of 10 meters, which was mostly the span of the courtyards. This relative lack of crowding of living space has

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 13]

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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751 Europeans was that the Badagas were dirty people (Keys 1812: xlix; Gover 1871: 86; Madras 1928: 63; Vivekanandam Pillai 1937: 247). Some explained this as due to the coldness of the mountain water, others to lack of soap! In fact this latter word had to be borrowed from English; the Badagas used a substitute before they began to buy soap. It was either a piece of bark from the pellitory plant or else was *siakoy*, a powder they made from certain dried fruits.

751 515 The Badagas did not in the past bathe daily, and this was a factor in their lack of resistance to parasites and disease. Since one's relatives often died, however, and festivals were quite frequent too, there were monthly opportunities to bathe before a ceremony or after a funeral. Early in the present century Badagas began to use soap and to bathe at least once a week (Ranga 1934: 68). Nowadays children are washed every evening, while adults bathe first thing each morning. Small children are also given a castor oil bath sometimes, but adults like a bath in sesame oil. This is rubbed all over the head and body, and is then left on while the person sits in the sun for an hour or two. It is easily washed off with soap and water afterwards. Sesame oil is thought to have a "cooling" effect on the body; but it is never swallowed.

751 124 Dissatisfaction with standards of hygiene and cleanliness was minimal in 1963, according to interviews I had then with 301 Badaga males and another 119 females. These adults were asked if they thought hygiene and cleanliness should be improved in their villages. Of the males 8.3 per cent said Yes, 91.7 per cent No; of the women, only 0.8 per cent—one person—said Yes!

751 514 515 2.10. Another complaint of nineteenth century Europeans concerned the use of the Ootacamund Lake and other Nilgiri streams "as a receptacle for sewage of the worst kind," and this was a real health hazard, since the same sources provided most of the drinking water (Price 1908: 35, 170). Conveniently for their own peace of mind, the Badagas have an appropriate saying: "Because the river flows it is not impure." The underlying idea is that if a man washes his rectum in a stream, a girl with menses bathes in it, or someone urinates in it, the water is not impure unless one can actually see blood or feces in the water at the point where one is standing. Even so, every village has a designated place where the women can wash their vulvae. When a person defecates in the countryside, he does not wipe the rectum but walks to the nearest stream and washes it

there. (The Todas are the only group in this region who habitually wipe the rectum with green leaves.)

2.11. The nose is cleaned by holding it between the index finger and thumb of the left hand, and blowing the mucus onto the ground. With babies, a relative sucks the nose and then spits the mucus out.

No one should spit on the floor of the house or blow his nose there. Well-mannered people do not spit on the yard outside either, but might instead spit on the grass of the village green provided nobody else was nearby. Furthermore, people do not spit in a temple out of respect for the god; nor on a funeral ground. Two types of spittoons, nowadays of brass, are kept in the house: a *kuplike* for men and an *uggu kiṇḍi* for men and old women. The latter vessel must be kept in the outer room, and although men do use the vessel they will not touch it. The men's spittoon, *kuplike*, must not be used by women, but may be carried into the inner, more sacred room of the house.

Spitting is an act that normally accompanies the chewing of tobacco. It is charged with a good deal of social significance. Thus if a woman spits on the ground near an enemy, this means: "I don't like you — go away!" A man will spit at an enemy when abusing him, but if he otherwise spits in someone's direction it means he is going to fight with that person. If during a ceremony a boy is staring at a girl in the crowd, she either opens her mouth to show that she will accept his advances, or spits on the ground to show she does not. Until the nineteenth century one of the severest punishments for a woman was to make her drink water from an earthen spittoon in public.

2.12. Badagas clean the teeth by rubbing them with charcoal and then rinsing the mouth. Those who have settled in the Waina:ḍ (the Waina:ḍ Gaudas) make a black powder for cleaning the teeth, by frying up the husks of grain with salt. A proverb wisely admonishes that, "The teeth are spoiled by not picking with a stick."

2.13. In early days Badaga women rubbed butter into their hair and bodies (as Toda women still do); but they used no scents. In those times women had no hair brushes, and so they would take the prickly seed pod of the thorn-apple, dry it out, and use it instead. Now hairbrushes are universally used.

Women regularly remove their armpit and pubic hair nowadays, with the help of a special soap sold in the market which causes the

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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841 the average after 25 days, and may even span two months. Girls are reported to begin at 14 or 15 years, but in some cases menarche comes at 12.

841 These are the simple physiological facts as Badagas know them,
783 yet the social implications of menstruation are anything but simple. "Menses (*olavu*) pollutes nine houses; and likewise a person who has not yet washed after a meal pollutes seven houses." As this pro-
[343] verb underlines, the event pollutes a woman and could pollute her home too; so that it has been customary for every woman to spend a few days each month in a special menstrual hut. Every village used
841 to have one (some still do), a fact that underlines the general threat
343 women posed to the purity of the Badaga house. Thurston (1909: 102-03) and "Miles" (1933: 73) record that a girl might be sent to the hut on a Friday a few days before the new moon, a few months before her first menses, lest this come on an inauspicious day. Should this occur, no further ritual precaution can be taken.

881 At the onset of a girl's first menses she is immediately taken to the nearest river where, no matter what the weather, she takes a
• [515] bath and then puts on a clean set of clothes given by her parents. The girl throws her old clothes away before bathing, or else picks
[783] them up afterwards with a stick and disposes of them. Nobody should touch polluted clothes, although non-Badaga scavengers may in fact take them away. Similarly the new clothes which a girl wears during her first menstrual seclusion will also be thrown away and never touched again.

881 Once these new clothes are on, she goes directly to the menstrual
343 hut if her village still has one. Although it is no longer a common institution some villages maintain one today merely for its ritual
[178] use at a girl's first menstruation, and older women are not secluded in it. Where the hut does not exist the girl is sent off to a cowshed (probably a disused one, because this is supposed to be a sacred building); or failing that a vacant house, or at least a separate room of her own house. This latter might be built for her on one end of the veranda, particularly if it is raining heavily at the time.

881 Once in her hut or room the girl is under severe restrictions. She must not touch milk (Jagor 1876: 200). She cannot go to the public water source, nor should she pass near the temple or along the street where the Great House stands (that built by the founder of the village); nor should she attend any auspicious ceremony or public festival. She should not step over the village's water channel, or the

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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881 till morning but must be completed at every house, no matter how late the hour. If necessary the girl must even knock on doors and [788] waken people. Everyone should bless her, as her own mother has already done, with a formula wishing her: "May you, my darling, soon receive a husband, bring forth a son, build your own house and live happy" (Natesa Sastri 1892: 761; Francis 1908: 131). From [884] this time onward the girl is really a full-fledged member of the village community. There is a rule, no longer followed, that she should now bow down to any visitor from another hamlet, whether a man or woman. More importantly she is now recognized as being ready [304] for marriage. Traditionally her forehead would be tattooed a few days later, leaving a visible sign of her marriageability (Natesa Sastri 1892: 760; Francis 1908: 131).

343 3.13. The menstrual hut (*holagudi*—"pollution place") was an important institution in the lives of adult women. They were customarily 841 secluded there for a period of five to seven days (Thurston 1909: 103; "Miles" 1933: 74). If a woman discovered her condition 841 before washing in the morning, that day would be considered the 805 *third* of seven days of pollution. To be more exact: in calculating those days, the second day of observable menstruation is counted as the third; but if the onset is noticed before sunrise then that same day is already counted as the nominal third day. This habit of mind is [539] expressed in the proverb: "If dying today, it will be three days by tomorrow." Thus the entire menstrual period would cover five or six days, and not seven as informants may assert. It was the custom that 841 on the real third day of her five secluded days a woman would bathe [515] in cold water using bark of pellitory as soap. On the fourth day she was to repeat this bath, but could then put on a change of clothing, leave the hut, and spend part of the night on her own veranda. After cooking and eating her evening meal there she would bathe again and could then enter the outer, less sacred room of the house. Early next morning the spot where she slept was cleaned, and the woman bathed in the stream. Then she would return home, eat her meals in the outer room, and remain there until next morning, the sixth actual day, when the pollution period would terminate. During the entire period no one may touch a menstruating woman. [783] Should a child nonetheless do so he must be washed to remove the pollution before he comes into contact with anyone else.

It was customary for women to use a kind of sanitary pad in the menstrual hut, made out of shredded bark and leaves ("Miles"

not savour the idea of that; (although if it happens nothing in particular follows). Should the infant die shortly afterwards, before it has been named, it too is treated as afterbirth material and buried at the usual cemetery. If someone asks the mournful family who has died, the answer must be "No one."

4.13. For the first day or two after birth the mother is given a hot bath four or five times daily. Up till this time she cannot bathe herself, but must have some woman help her. After that time she bathes herself in hot water, twice daily until 25 to 30 days after delivery, and thereafter once daily. Always, the water used is hot. The baby is given a bath three times daily for the first eight days, then twice a day till the nineteenth day, and thereafter once daily, in the evening only.

In the old days, the newly delivered mother was given a special preparation of little millet. This was first baked, and then boiled till it was a mushy porridge (Birch 1838: 104). Now she eats a non-liquid curry. For that peppercorns are fried in a clarified butter, then ground up on the curry grinder. Then some garlic is fried, and salt, tamarind and clarified butter mixed with it while it is kept warm beside the fire. A limited amount of this food is given to the mother twice daily until the fourth or fifth day after delivery, by an old woman who will restrict the quantity even though the mother might want more. Thereafter, for the next 20 to 40 days, according to the state of the mother's health, she continues with this as her morning meal, but in the evenings has paddy rice and lentil soup. She can take a small amount of milk, even from the day of her delivery. This can only be cow's milk, and must be boiled before drinking. It is recognized that a woman who has given birth may appear weak and ugly, and repeated births can lead to ill-health. A proverb puts it this way: "The appearance of a woman who has just given birth to one child is like the appearance of a heifer which has given birth that day."

No woman who has given birth may touch any household utensils till the third, fifth, seventh or ninth day after the first full or new moon, I was told; alternatively it has been reported that she must first see the crescent moon before the period of pollution can end (Thurston 1909: 109). She should be given no work for eight days before or eight days after her delivery: during that fortnight her husband must provide for all her needs, even if he is on the point of divorcing her. It used to be that after five, seven,

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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136 752 these, is the flea, "which is very numerous in the early part of the monsoon. They are put to flight by [278] [drinking] an infusion of a plant called by the natives Wassumboo [*vasambu*], (*Acorus calamus*), which is indigenous in the Hills." (Baikie 1857: 110)

6.19. Badagas recognize several types of lice and tick. "All live on the dirt of the body or clothes and are spontaneously generated from it," I was told. It is therefore a shameful matter to have these parasites, when, as one proverb puts it, "Small insects are browsing on the head of an uncaring man." To prevent lice, people wash themselves [515] daily and also shave off pubic hair (cf. 2.13). Epi- [164] demics of relapsing fever have spread from time to time through the community with the help of body lice (Madras 1928: 63).

136 752 539 6.20. It is recognized that if the bites of larger animals are not cared for properly they may prove fatal, as one proverb warns: "The person scratched by a porcupine cannot return to the] village; a person scratched by a hyena cannot [return to the] yard." Also in the same vein is this one: "The man who is torn by the ibex is not for the house-yard; the man who is torn by the pig is not for the village"; in short, he is finished. The rarest biting animal, now 136 nearly extinct in the Nilgiris, is the tiger. Only tigers that are wounded in the face or suffer from other ailments that prevent them from hunting effectively will become man-eaters (Anderson 1967: *passim*).

136 752 There have been few recent cases of tigers mauling Badagas, and there is no specific treatment for such wounds beyond the above-mentioned cures for lacerations. Such treatment is also attempted when Badagas are gored by cattle, primarily buffaloes.

6.21. In a case of dog-bite a small amount of lime is put on the wound, and a small copper coin tied on top of this. The patient should not bathe for three days; on the fourth day the bandage can be removed and the wound is cured.

None but a mad jackal would bite a man. Villagers

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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have been found a therapist takes cold water fresh from the spring, and adds to it three pieces of Bermuda grass and three dead-nettle flowers. This water along with its contents is sprinkled thrice over the child's head and nude body. The procedure is repeated on the fifth, seventh and ninth days after the spots were noticed, but using the same number of pieces of grass and of dead-nettle as there have been days since the apparent onset of the illness. By the ninth day the child usually feels better, but "in one case out of ten" this same procedure has to be followed for the final time on the eleventh day, using 11 flowers and 11 pieces of grass.

After the final treatment the child's body is washed for the first time since the infection was recognized. The bath-water needs to be at body temperature, but if it turns out to be too hot the parent must wait for it to cool and may not on this occasion add cold water to cool it. To this particular bath some turmeric and a nim leaf are added. When the water is ready it is poured over the child's head and body, but the parents do not rub him, wash him with soap, or even touch him. He is not dried with a towel, but made to sit in the house covered with a cloth while incense, turmeric and the dry outer skins of garlic and red onion are burnt together under the cloth. The child sits in this smoke for a minute or two, and only after doing so can he use woollen clothes again.

VARIOLA (*doḍḍamma*)

7.3. Probably no epidemic disease has been commoner or more feared among the Badagas than smallpox (Ouchterlony 1868: 65). In response to it they have developed a method of quarantine that certainly does much to restrict its spread.

The disease is caused by a visitation of the goddess Mariamma. To prevent her coming most Badaga villages celebrate an annual festival in her honour. At one well-known such festival at the temple site of Bokkapu:r chickens, goats and sheep

4: Hockings B-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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759 that if this habit became general, the therapists would make themselves equally accessible to all patients.

[844] [431] There is a local tradition that a midwife should be given a new dress by the child's father after a delivery. It is actually given at the child's naming ceremony or else on the last day of the funeral observation should the neonate die. For the last 15 years of her life Sithamma did not deliver babies herself, but was sometimes in attendance and instructed her assistants. People still offered her the dress, but she blessed it and asked them to give it to somebody in need of it.

Midwives

759 554 10.6. Through the centuries there has been one special role, outside of the family, that has always been held by women, and that is the role of midwife. It has been a position that commands respect for the skill that she must have. Not every woman of course is a potential midwife; but the interested younger women receive some training whenever a delivery occurs in their village. A midwife quite often becomes more than a deliverer of babies. Partly because she is asked to minister to the varied health needs of parturient women and the newborn, she is trusted and consulted and may in time become skilled as a curer of other physical disorders as well. Sometimes she supervises birth among the domestic animals.

759 844 [842] Often there is more than one midwife in a village; other women are asked to come to a delivery if they have helped with one before, and of course the girls who are learning midwifery attend. Yet other women will want to come and watch, and barren women may feel that if they attend they might also become pregnant through the magic of contiguity. The small room may therefore be quite crowded and stuffy.

759 844 783 [515] Midwives go to their work without necessarily washing first. A midwife is polluted by each birth—for three days if it is the mother's first delivery, for one day otherwise ; but this does not imperil a midwife's status in the community. If it is a woman's first delivery, the midwife throws her own clothes away, otherwise she just washes them. A high-status Lingayat such as Sithamma removes her *linga* emblem before beginning at the polluting

121 We shall now consider the lower end of the "social ladder", the poorest Badaga families, so as to see how their lack of either affluence or influence affects their position in Nilgiri society.

There is very widespread agreement across India and Pakistan that certain occupations, and the jatis centered on them, are of low respectability. Among the commonest of such occupations are washerman, scavenger, barber, blacksmith, leather-worker, and basket-maker. In the Badaga economy, however, none of these occurs as a regular kind of employment. The lowest phratry are the Toreyas, and (615) their inferiority relative to the other phratries is explained by the fact that they act as messengers and "village servants" to the others. The duties of blacksmith, leather-worker and basket-maker, as we have already seen, are roles for members of some other tribes with which the Badagas interact; and thus these needs of the Badagas can adequately be met by local non-Badagas. How do Badagas handle the supposedly demeaning tasks of the washerman, the scavenger and the barber?

462 Women wash the family clothes, and it is not a shame for even a boy to wash clothes -- although adult men will not do it (Macpherson 1820: lix; Ranga 1934: 71). It is only the poorest of Badaga families who might supplement their 463 income -- and particularly if they own no land at all -- by washing the clothes of SSH others, however. Even in their case, this does not become a full-time occupation. In the same way only the poorest of Badaga men would act as barbers to richer men. For both these services payment used to be made in grain. One would never see two men shaving each other on a reciprocal basis, except among the very poorest who had made this a subsidiary occupation (Vivekanandam Pillai 1937: 249). The most demeaning of all services that a poor man might find himself obliged to perform is that of shaving the pubic hair from richer men. It is common to remove (515)

463 554 [515] all pubic hair (though Badaga women do it for themselves) because it is thought unesthetic and is found to harbor lice and ticks. The disgrace attached to this occupation is well displayed in one of the great expressions of Badaga disdain: "What can you do? -- You can't even shave my cock!" Badagas who are forced to take up barbering because of poverty never make a full-time occupation of it, especially as professional barbers are now generally available from other communities. So far as scavenging is concerned, there is no need at all to remove night soil from the houses, because Badagas always defecate either in the fields and bushes, or in a special manure pit. The feces of small children are not considered polluting and are easily removed from the house by anyone. All other cleaning and sweeping around the house is done by the womenfolk living there.

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Those Badagas who are neither gentry nor in the poverty-stricken category show some signs of having achieved upward mobility over the past century or so. There was traditionally a class of gentry, as we know, that was distinguished by higher prestige and higher behavioral expectations. On the other hand there was in all likelihood no class of poverty-stricken Badagas obliged to become barbers or launderers until land pressure and the settlement of boundaries in the 1880's had made it difficult for the disinherited and landless to find new farming land. Only in the 80 or 90 years since that period has this landless class emerged at the bottom of the status hierarchy. And as it emerged, the prestige of the gentry was continuously on the wane. Both changes were related, as we shall see, to increasing Badaga involvement in the Indian cash economy. The middle class of peasant families seems slowly to have decreased the gap in conduct and prestige that separated them from the gentry families; until now the cash income of a family is the clearest mark of its influence in the community. The aristocratic values of

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